Written by Ron Borges
Wednesday, 01 July 2009 19:00

The present state of heavyweight boxing in America makes the Era of the Lost Heavyweights back in the time of Tim Witherspoon, Greg Page, Michael Dokes, Tony Tubbs, Mike Weaver look like the Golden Age of boxing. Cris Arreola would like to change that.

Frankly, there's no real reason to hope that he will but he and his promoter, Dan Goossen, were out beating the bushes (actually the table cloth) Tuesday at an Italian restaurant in Sherman Oaks, Ca., trying to goose WBC champion Vitali Klitschko into giving the undefeated but untested Arreola a title shot. Considering Arreola's conditioning issues, keeping him away from a restaurant would seem to be the best strategy but Goossen knows most journalists, like most armies, work best when well fed.

This press conference to announce nothing came only days before the leading American heavyweight hopeful, Eddie Chambers (34-1), faces off against undefeated Russian Alexander Dimitrenko (29-0) in a WBO elimination fight in Hamburg, Germany to find the next challenger for Wladimir Klitschko. Goossen's time might have been better spent chasing Chambers around but nobody wants to fight anybody any more, which is one reason Arreola is 27-0 with 24 knockouts yet nobody outside his nearest and dearest have the slightest clue who he is.

In a boxing sense, neither does Goossen. Arreola's biggest victory was stopping perennial also-ran Jameel McCline two months ago. His only other remotely notable victory was a win by disqualification over Chazz Witherspoon, whose only claim to fame is he isn't as good as his uncle Tim was. So what does that tell us about Cris Arreola?

Nothing, frankly.

Yet the lack of a resume has never stopped Goossen from arguing a case for his fighters and Tuesday was no exception. He reminded the assembled that he's more resilient than Carmen Basilio, insisting Arreola could pack Dodger Stadium if he could just lure a champion into a ring there.

"If there is a man that can sell 40,000 or more seats in L.A., it's Cristobal Arreola,'' Goossen said with a straight face. "We'd love to fight at Dodger Stadium and it will happen.''

Only if the Dodgers sign Arreola and he goes after an opposing pitcher. In theory, perhaps, if one of the Klitschko brothers agreed to come to L.A. to fight Arreola it's a possibility but so is Lennox Lewis coming to L.A. to fight Arreola. They're both possibilities because all three men are still alive. Beyond that, as the Klitschkos like to say, "Nyet!''

"I believe that the most important heavyweight fighter is sitting here in front of you today,'' Goossen said. One was left to assume he meant Arreola as there were no other heavyweights sitting in front of anyone in Sherman Oaks.

“We’ve seen Wladimir Klitschko, his brother Vitali and (WBA champion) Nikolai Valuev and none of them have captured the hearts and attention of America. Cristobal is the most important heavyweight in the world because he has all the intentions of bringing that heavyweight title back to America.

“We believe he would knock out any heavyweight champion right now because of his fighting style. The biggest challenge and the only challenge right now in America is Cristobal Arreola.’’

Those are brave words considering that not too long ago Cristobal Arreola was on the floor with the less than formidable Travis Walker standing over him. To be fair, Arreola got up from this indignity and dropped Walker three times before stopping him in the third round but it is difficult to come up with a scenario where Travis Walker is standing over the brothers Klitschko unless he’s delivering lunch to their table.

Still, Goossen has always been a persistent salesman and he insisted Arreola would be fighting in L.A. by the fall (which is likely) and against “a world champion,’’ which is not.

“We’ve been aggressive in trying to make fights with Valuev and both Klitschkos but right now they’re just making a business decision,’’ Goossen said as if that differentiated them from every other boxer aroundtoday. “They want the money in Europe and they’re not taking the challenges that the fans want to see. But there’s money here. I believe Cristobal against any of the world champions could sell out Dodger Stadium.’’

That seems unlikely frankly but one thing that might help give such talk at least the appearance of legitimacy would be if Arreola would get the appearance of a professional boxer. Although admittedly a tough guy, Arreola has more spare tire on him than you find at a Goodyear plant. At 6-4, he weighed a loose 255 for McCline. Wladimir Klitschko also weighs 255. He just wears that weight in different places.

Goossen, however, is never ill-prepared. He anticipated some smarmy freeloader might raise a weighty question between bites of linguine and insisted, “”All I care about is our fighter being in great shape. I don’t care what he weighs. Cristobal is in great shape right now and that’s all that matters.

“The people who don’t believe in Cristobal are going to see he is the heavyweight that will bring the division back to prominence.’’

Maybe he will, but not until somebody outside of his grocer recognizes him.

In that regard Arreola’s trainer, Henry Ramirez, said a strength and conditioning coach had been hired by Arreola for the first time. He insisted this was a sign that he was taking his job more seriously. If he’s right, maybe Goossen will be to. But somehow the memory of Travis Walker standing over Arreola lingers like bad meat sauce.

For his part, Arreola complained he’d been pushed to the side in favor of David Haye, the former undisputed cruiserweight champion who was set to fight Wladimir Klitschko until a back

injury forced a postponement of their scheduled June 20 match.

“David Haye hasn’t fought anyone,’’ he said. “I don‘t think David Haye has done anything to deserve a shot at that title.’’

If the former undisputed cruiserweight champion of the world hasn’t done anything to deserve a shot at the title what has a guy whose biggest win is over Jameel McCline done?

Thus far, it seems, eat lunch.